



Cheltenham Cyclist

February 2003

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Surfaces like Ice at the new Waitrose Store.

Almost as soon as the doors had opened to the new Waitrose store emails started to be sent warning cyclist of the slippery surfaces around the Waitrose site. The problem appears to be the red surface (paint) which has been put down to mark the entrances to the car park. This surface whilst almost tolerable when dry is extremely slippery when wet. The result is that more than one cyclist has now been unceremoniously dismounted in a painful fashion. It is not only the slippery surface which caused Cheltenham

Cycle Campaign to take an interest. For a company which prides itself on its green credentials there are a number of areas of the site which have given cause for concern some of which were covered in the last issue of Cheltenham Cyclist. Since that issue an audit of the Waitrose site has been carried out. Amongst the findings are:

- The paths that lead up to Honeybourne Way are very steeply inclined, with a gradient of approx 20%, increasing to around 30% (1 in 3) at the top. One path also has an adverse camber. If this connection is intended for use by cyclists as a means of access between the shared footway and Chelt Walk (and hence to Waitrose), then it is a quite unsuitable and hazardous one. There is no signing to indicate the path status.
- Riding from the Millennium bridge to the south side of St Georges Road, there are four distinct types of surfacing, three of them loose. Immediately south of St Georges Road bridge, the loose stones are sufficiently large to present a significant hazard.
- There are 9 double-sided cycle parking stands, but only 17 places can be used as the end stand is placed very close to the building wall. Although the design is similar to

(Continued on page 2)

the preferred Sheffield or Universal type, the dimensions of 1.2m long and 0.86m high are larger than normal and not well suited to most cycles, particularly with regard to stand height. It is difficult to lock small cycles securely to the stands, and they provide inadequate support when loading a cycle with shopping. The location of the cycle parking stands, behind a trolley park is not clear and signs are not prominent.

- The cycle parking facilities for staff are very primitive and fall well short of what a major employer should provide in the 21st century. There is a need for more stands, to the recommended Sheffield/Universal design, situated in a secure compound with cover.

Waitrose in commenting on the audit have said they will look at staff cycle parking, but the Cheltenham Cyclist is awaiting, with interest, the fuller response to the report as a whole.



Safety/Speed camera challenge goes to the High Court

Cheltenham Cycle Campaign recently backed Transport 2000, the CTC and other groups by bringing to the attention of the Road Safety Liaison Group our objections to the regulation which seeks to make speed cameras highly visible, and also to our dismay that Gloucestershire's Road Safety Unit should endorse such a scheme. A précis of our submission is shown below.

Under pressure from the motoring lobby new guidelines for safety cameras took effect in June 2002. All cameras must now be painted yellow and sited conspicuously. Road safety activists, sustainable transport groups and vulnerable road users have joined in the criticism of this policy which was previously condemned by a Parliamentary Select Committee headed by Gwyneth Dunwoody.

Transport 2000 and the Slower Speeds Initiative have lodged papers with the High Court challenging the Government's record on cameras and seeking a judicial review of the guidelines.

The Select Committee's report on road traffic speed concluded "The new rules about the visibility and location of cameras are unreasonable. ... People will die as a result." Over 100 MPs, including Cheltenham's Nigel Jones, have endorsed the Committee's views through an early day motion.

Vicky Cann, assistant Director of Transport 2000, said "In no other area of criminal enforcement do criminals get warned that they might be prosecuted; so why are speeding motorists any different?"

The danger of these guidelines is that speeding motorists will brake before a yellow camera and then speed away after it, knowing they are 'safe' from prosecution."

Roger Geffen, the Cyclists' Touring Club's Policy Manager said: "Speeding traffic is a problem wherever it occurs. Speed is a contributory factor in over 1,100 deaths on Britain's roads every year, or one-third of all fatal crashes. It destroys the quality of life of both urban and rural communities through intimidation, excessive noise and air pollution and it removes the freedom to walk or cycle without fear of serious injury or worse."

Paige Mitchell of the Slower Speeds Initiative continued: "The Government's decision to paint all speed cameras yellow which, they admit, was based on no scientific evidence whatsoever, flies in the face of research that shows that cameras should be inconspicuous to deter deliberate speeders and that deliberate speeders are the ones most likely to crash. Painting all cameras yellow gives speeding motorists a clear message: if you cannot see a camera, you will not get caught."

Unfortunately these rational views are not held by everyone. Motoring organisations and much of the media see hidden speed cameras as unfair, as if attempts to reduce the deaths and serious injury of tens of thousands of people every year are some kind of game.

Gloucestershire's Road Safety Unit has allied itself to this camp, supporting the use of highly visible cameras at black spots. They tell us that the primary aim is to avoid casualties, not to raise revenue from fines. Quite so: but this leaves un-tackled the problem of motorists' in-

creased speeding in places where they can be highly confident of not being caught – places which include the full length of quiet rural roads, and those long sections of main roads away from black spots. Vulnerable users will be deterred further from using these roads, contrary to national, regional and local strategies to encourage more cycling and walking. It is about time Gloucestershire's Road Safety Unit admitted that they have been backing a wrong and misguided policy. In the interest of the safety of vulnerable road users and those who would like to cycle or walk if they felt less threatened, they must use their national standing to make an unequivocal condemnation of the Government guidelines; they must openly support the use of widespread, random zero tolerance speed checks. Once motorists have adapted their behaviour there is no reason why they should have to part with fines unless they are happy to drive with maximum permissible penalty points and with a total contempt for their fellow citizens.

Success for York's Cycling Paramedic

Mark Inman, York's cycling paramedic has cycled over 7,300 miles whilst responding to around 1,500 emergency calls, since the launch of the scheme in 2001.

This has helped to release about 20% of the ambulances for other emergency calls.

With such success in York, London and other cities isn't it about time a Cycling Paramedic scheme was tried here in Cheltenham?

After the AGM

The AGM at the beginning of November over-ran its expected duration with the result that the talk by Alison Parfitt did not get the amount of time that it perhaps deserved.

Alison talked about how groups determined their quality of life indicators, and how quite a number had not yet decided on what quality of life Indicator was appropriate for their particular group. For a cycle campaign group, people on bikes may well be the quality of life indicator used. She then went on to talk about how groups could network to enhance the quality of life and how the environment forum could be used to add value to what the groups were doing. She acknowledged that the Cycle Campaign had a good knowledge of relevant issues and was indeed ahead of many other groups.

The main part of the talk and following discussion related to Multi-modal Transport Studies, in which Alison has played a part. These studies cover all modes of transport along particular transport corridors. Some of these corridors are long, London to Penzance for instance. Where the main considerations would be road, rail and air. Other corridors may be quite short and would include walking and cycling as part of the study.

These studies make recommendations which inform legislation. An example of this was seen recently in the announcement of the widening of the A303. They also play a part in changing attitudes to transport issues. Though the people involved in the studies are only too well aware that

not only do some of the agencies perhaps not understand the issues involved but there is the temptation for Ministers to cherry pick from the report to appeal to their constituents or groups who are perceived to be powerful, such as the "AA" or "Road Hauliers Association".

Alison was responsible for feeding the thinking of her department to a multi-modal study Review conference in London, on how to connect Government Departments with the ideas being put forward. Communication within departments is seen on occasions to be poor and across departments to be almost non-existent. How do you, for example, get across to the relevant departments that there appears to be real disconnection between capital expenditure and projects and that there is a growing recognition by the road Hauliers and AA. that growing congestion will lead to road charging.

Others will object to road pricing on social exclusion grounds as they believe that road pricing will move the congestion to the poorer areas with consequent impact on transport services (bus etc.) to the detriment of those in the area.

All in all a good talk with plenty to think about, and deserving of more time.



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CTC to organise cycle training

Draft plans for national cycle training schemes have been published by national cyclists' organisation CTC. Proposals cover the training of instructors, leaders and organisers in addition to a national standard for cycle training.

John Franklin a CCC member and author of "Cycle Craft" has been involved in this project from the start and is expected to be a leading member of any training organisation in this area.

The government is already backing CTC's adult and teenage cycle training programme, due to be launched this Spring. This new initiative goes a step further and will establish a quality assurance mark for all aspects of instruction including cycling holidays and day rides, child protection and the running of events on public roads.

It will bring into line the numerous training schemes that already exist – the exact number is not known - and will enable many more organisations to train cyclists and lead cycle rides and tours. The project could play a key role in increasing the number of trips made by bike in the UK to eight per cent by 2012 which is the aim of the National Cycling Strategy.

CTC Director Kevin Mayne said: "There are some very good schemes in many parts of the country but in general, the national organisation of cycling activities and cycle training is a shambles. There are many people who would like to run cycling activities but are unable do so be-

cause they cannot meet standards demanded by insurers, schools and parents. "This initiative will have the most impact on those who have never cycled or who have not ridden for some time. We may lose a few businesses that can't or won't meet child protection or safety standards but the project will also empower far more to help more people to cycle regularly."

The CTC project will bring cycling into line with canoeing, mountaineering and motor cycling where there are already well established national training standards. Mayne said: "Compared to other activities, cycling looks like a very poor relation."

Around 300,000 children complete cycle training schemes each year but at least half of those programmes do not even meet existing guidelines. There are also more than 100 small businesses running cycling holidays and between 1,500 and 2,000 local groups organising rides.

Every highway authority has, in theory, a statutory obligation to carry out cycle training but at least a third does not.

The adult and teenage cycle training scheme will be launched in the spring. CTC wants all other aspects of accreditation to be available by 2004 and to see the number of children trained to national standards to quadruple by 2006.

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County Cycle Forum

Representatives of Cheltenham Cycle Campaign attend regular meetings of the County's Cycle Forum where they learn about the County plans and, hopefully, have some input. At the Forum on 13th December Andre Curtis and John Mallows joined representatives from the Cyclists' Touring Club, Gloucester City Cycling Club, Cheltenham and County Cycling Club and Bicycle Action Group of Gloucester to hear David Radford of the County's Road Safety team describe safety auditing of highway developments.

John reported that David and his team clearly have the best of motives but, like many other officials working on transport and road safety, they have misunderstand cycling needs. The audit method has a narrow perspective which misses the broad effect on cyclists and seems to have no recognition of the hierarchy of cycling provisions set out by the Institute of Highways and Transportation. Andre was left feeling decidedly uneasy, especially as developers are even allowed to self audit their schemes.

On a brighter note David Radford agreed that cyclists have a general right to use the whole carriageway, even when special facilities are provided and that on road cycle lanes less than 1.5 metres wide are unsafe. Unfortunately this is at odds with the guidelines for cycling provisions currently used by the County Council. These guidelines were compiled by Halcrow, a contractor that works for

many local authorities. As an example,

of these guidelines, Halcrow have declared that any cycling facilities are better than nothing, whereas cycling experts agree with the IHT that it is usually better to have no facility than a low quality one.



In a recent case, Cycling Weekly, a primarily cycling sports magazine, runs a feature looking for the most useless cycling facility in the land. Halcrow were strong contenders, having created a cycle lane on the A19 east of Selby which is an inch narrower than a bike's handlebars. Cyclists who stray outside these impossibly narrow lanes get short shrift from drivers who nearly always drive up to the white line. So the cyclist ends up with less space and more harassment than if there had been no lane. The County Forum has arranged for cycling representatives to hear, at the end of January, Halcrow's review of cycling facilities in the Severn Vale. Let's hope Cheltenham Cycling Campaign can have a positive influence on them.

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Reflections of a town cyclist.

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Normally I am relaxed, and enjoy the wind, sunshine, rain, cold or whatever happens to be served up on that particular day. It's only a short 8 minute ride to work, and it is satisfying to slip along the cycle lanes inside the long queues of waiting cars. If I have to take the car in it seldom takes less than 15 minutes both morning and going home.

But there are times when I un-relax. There seems to be a rule, if you are a motorist, that **you have to overtake a bike at all costs**. Can't they see, I say to myself, that the road is blocked ahead? What purpose is served by squeezing past me and then blocking my passage through? So I begin to write angry letters in my head to the Echo. That vents my annoyance and off I go again, enjoying the fresh air.

I don't know how many such letters have been 'written', but I never actually write them because I'm sure it will only put motorists' backs up even more. "How dare a cyclist suggest they have any rights to be on the road - they are just a obstruction and must be overtaken at all costs". So I began to think the other way round. There are some considerate motorists, who appreciate that a bike on the road means one less car, and thus less congestion; and who realise that if the bike is given room it will get through and be on its way. Thus it was that this letter did get written, and sent off. It appeared in the Echo on Saturday 18th January:

MAKE TODAY A GOOD BIKE DAY

Madam - I recently had a good day cycling across Cheltenham.

A car stayed behind me as I approached a queue of traffic, allowing me to get access to the cycle lane. Most days they would have rushed past and then blocked the road ahead.

When I reached the traffic lights there was no one blocking the area for cyclists at the front of the junction, allowing me to turn right safely.

Another car behind me waited behind me when the driver realised the road ahead was blocked by someone turning right. Most days they would overtake me to try to get past on the inside, only to block my way through.

Two cars wanting to turn left waited patiently behind me and let me carry straight on instead of overtaking and cutting dangerously left in front of me.

I met no bikes on my return in the dark without lights. I saw no people riding bikes on the pavements.

The trouble is that few days are good days for cycling and that puts people off. I am a motorist, but it is quicker to cross Cheltenham on a bike. It gives me exercise and makes more room for others who have to drive.

Perhaps we should all resolve to be considerate to cyclists.

Cyclists are not obstructions that have to be overtaken at all costs.

And when we cycle we need to share the road with traffic, using lights at night, and not the pavement with pedestrians.

Can we hope for more good cycling days? Then perhaps many more will be encouraged to cycle in Cheltenham.

You travel faster, get exercise and save money and the environment.

Keith Ross

The value of a cyclist's life, £135 and 6 penalty points

The CTC has condemned the paltry sentence handed out to a driver after her actions caused a cyclist's death.

The woman was not banned and was fined just £135 with six penalty points when she pleaded guilty to careless driving after her car hit cyclist Jason Salter causing him fatal head injuries in a crash in Thetford, Norfolk, last August.

She was attempting to overtake 17-year-old Jason as traffic approached but gave him too little room and did not even cross the central white line. The woman said Jason wobbled as she passed him and lost control of his bike but admitted in court that she should have waited before overtaking. He died of his injuries the day after the crash.

Rule 139 of the Highway Code states that drivers should "give motorcyclists, cyclists and horse riders at least as much room as you would a car when overtaking."

CTC recently backed plans by the Director of Public Prosecutions David Calvert-Smith to encourage prosecutors to bring tougher charges when custody is justified.

Roger Geffen, Campaigns and Policy Manager said: "The court in this case has sent out a frightening message: it is fine to drive in a way that you know will endanger others.

"The driver has been largely absolved of re-

sponsibility for Jason's death despite admitting in court that her action was wrong. The least that the court should have done was ban this woman from driving. The message for government is clear: motorists must be forced to take more responsibility for road safety."

Flashing Lights

In a reply to a question from Lord Freyberg, the Government has set out its position on flashing lights on bicycles. "The Road Vehicle Lighting Regulations 1989 do not allow cyclists to use flashing lamps for historical reasons. Flashing lamps have traditionally been used to attract extra attention to a vehicle and are not permitted on vehicles that are simply proceeding forwards in the normal way. The Government are considering amending the regulations to permit optional flashing lamps to be used in addition to the steady lights required by the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations. The Department for Transport is intending to issue a consultation paper on proposals early next year. Research into pedal cycle lighting and conspicuity commissioned by the Department for Transport concluded that flashing lamps do not improve conspicuity but neither do they impair it". There will be another consultation on this early in 2003.



DfT Latest Statistics show government is failing to meet targets

The latest transport statistics from the Department for Transport make depressing reading for the cyclist. The data, contained in the fifth edition of "Transport Trends", looks at the latest statistics and compares them against data collected over the past 20 years.

The Government target of increasing cycle use is not being met though the government is at least consistent as practically all other targets are also currently out of reach. In order to make a difference and increase the use of bicycles some new thinking is required.

Some new money has been set aside for cycle schemes, some £1.5 million each year for the next five years, but this is a paltry sum when compared to the provision of a new road/bypass which is usually costed at about £30 million per mile. (The "improvements" to the A417 a few years ago cost £28 million per mile).

The latest trends from the report show:

- Road traffic has increased by 73% since 1980.
- Over the past 20 years the cost of motoring has remained at or below its 1980 level, in real terms. Whereas bus fares have increased by 31% and rail fares by 37%. Offsetting this average income has risen by more than 80%, thus travelling overall has become more affordable.
- Walking and cycling have both declined over the past 20 years. The accompanying growth in motor traffic has been responsible for a 39% increase in greenhouse gas emissions or about 26% of

the total UK emissions.

- The recommended amount of exercise is 30 minutes per day, which could be achieved by walking or cycling shorter journeys. National Travel Survey data indicates that fewer than 1 in 6 people manage a 30 minute walk each day, averaged over a week. Cycling was well below that with only about 1 in 50 people making a cycle journey lasting 30 minutes or more.

Further cycling specific data is available from the DfE leaflet "Cycling in England". This leaflet describing itself as a "Personal Travel Fact sheet" can be obtained on-line from www.transtat.dft.gov.uk/personal.

Amongst the statistics on this leaflet it can be found that whilst distance cycled per person has fallen the average trip distance has increased, from 1.9 miles to 2.4 miles per trip. Men make more use of a bicycle than women, on average men do 25 trips per year but women only 10. Men in the 16 to 20 age group cycle on average 130 miles per year but for all other age groups the average is just 66 miles per year. Of those cycling to school, a mere 2%, the average trip length is 1.5 miles.

The main reasons for cycling were, business (43%), leisure/social (30%) and shopping (13%).

Probably the most telling statistic which shows just how under used bicycles are is that in 1999/2001, 43% of households owned at least one bicycle, a greater ownership than that of cars!

Cycle Campaign to lead seminar on Best Practice

The Cheltenham Cycle Campaign is to lead a seminar on best practice within traffic engineering with cyclists in mind. Discussions have been taking place with the County Council with a view to advising in the promotion of best practice and cooperation between planners and engineers.

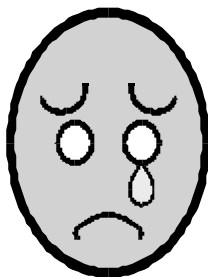
This is to be a joint initiative between the Cheltenham Cycle Campaign and the Bicycle Action Group of Gloucester. (BAGG).

Slower Speeds on Rural Roads

The Slower Speeds Initiative is holding a conference in Taunton on Tuesday 18th February. The theme of the conference is Rural Speed Management.

Web Site

Some of you may have noticed that our web site has been "off air" since a week or so before Christmas. Unfortunately it appears that the company we used to host the site is no longer trading. We are actively looking for a replacement provider where hopefully we will still be able to use our registered domain name cyclecheltenham.org.uk. Email addresses to "anyone"@cyclecheltenham.org.uk are also affected. The CCN web site has also been affected by this closure



Help Wanted



The editor of this esteemed journal is looking for a little help. If you can write in an interesting and informative way on cycling issues please contact the editor or secretary of the Cheltenham Cycle Campaign.

The amount of time involved is not high as our current production is four issues per year.

CCN/CTC Conference

The Spring 2003 CCN/CTC cycle planning conference is being held in London on **Saturday 10th May**.

Further details of venue and agenda will be available in due course.

CCN's Annual General Meeting will take place during the lunch break of this event.

Cycling and Health

Nottingham University in conjunction with the CTC are organising a conference to discuss:

- The links between cycling promotion and health promotion.
- Show the relevance of cycling to a range of NHS aims and indicators.
- Review the applicability of some of the initiatives already taken

The event will take place at Nottingham University on 27th March 2003. There is a special concessionary rate of £25 for campaigners.

A booking form is available from Lynn Cooper on 0115 951 4132. Bookings must be made by 27th February.

National Bike Week 2003

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A number of promotional themes have been announced for this year's UK-wide Bike Week, which is to take place from 14th-22nd June.

The themes are:

- Buying or hiring a bike - getting a bike back on the road
- Learning to ride - cycling with a 'buddy' - where to ride?
- Family fun and fitness - encouraging more women to cycle
- Bike2Work - individually or as part of an organised ride
- Get off the beaten track - go cycling in the countryside

It is hoped that by concentrating on the five options above that more people will be encouraged to start or re-start cycling.

Nick Harvey national co-ordinator of bike week hopes to register more than a thousand local events, most of which will be eligible for free public liability insurance and promotional materials.

Bike2Work will run for the whole week, as last year, participants are requested to donate the money they save on fuel and parking to Cancer Research UK. Five hundred major employers are being targeted to encourage and promote cycling to work. Help is also available to existing workplace bicycle user groups (BUGs) to recruit new members.

The majority of funding for Bike week is coming from the Department for Transport, where transport minister John Spellar has requested more events that ap-

peal to novice cyclists, especially women and families. In 2002, approximately 50% of the estimated 200,000 participants in Bike Week events were new or returning cyclists. Of the 20+ million bikes owned in the UK, less than a third are used regularly.

For further information contact HQ@bikeweek.org.uk or phone Nick Harvey on 01243 543888

Web site: www.bikeweek.org.uk/

Gloucestershire Structure Plan

The Gloucestershire Structure Plan Third Alteration has just been published.

The Cycle Campaign will be re-viewing this document to assess any impact on transport systems as they affect cyclists in our area. Comments on the document can be made until 10th March. Copies of the are available for £25 from Shire Hall, it should also be available on the county web site.



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Middlesborough opens bike park with showers and changing facilities

The North East's first staffed, secure cycle parking facility has been opened in Middlesborough. This cycling centre offers free cycle parking for up to 55 cycles per day with showers, changing facilities, lockers and toilets also provided. The centre also houses an information area with a wealth of route maps, cycle guides, reports and leaflets on all aspects of cycling from traffic advisory guides to green travel plans. The Centre is located on the Stockton to Middlesborough section of route 1 of the National Cycle Network.

Web sites worth a look

<http://www.slower-speeds.surf3.net/index.htm>

Campaigning site for lower speeds on some of our roads.

<http://www.carbusters.ecn.cz/> Site which gives views of an alternative way of life, i.e. without a car.

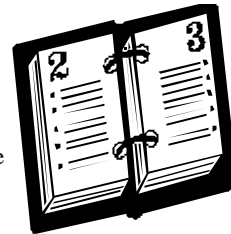
<http://www.bikereader.com/BikeReader/BikeReader.html> Worth a visit for the dictionary of cycling.

<http://www.transtat.dft.gov.uk/tables/2002/tt/section2/section2.htm> Look here for the latest transport statistics

<http://www.transtat.dft.gov.uk/facts/ntsfacts/2003/pdf/cyce.pdf> You can download a pdf version of the DfT "Cycling in England" from here.

www.cyclecheltenham.org.uk We are working to get this site back online as soon as possible. Email addresses to the site are also affected.

Dates for Your Diary



Wednesday 5th March 7.30 p.m. Cycle Campaign general meeting where members are invited to give their views, it is intended to keep the more boring committee business to a minimum at this meeting.

Thursday 27th March Cycling and Health conference Nottingham University. Contact Lynn Cooper on 0115 951 4132 for booking form

Saturday 10th May CCN/CTC conference. The organiser for this conference is the London Cycle Campaign.

Cheltenham Cycle Campaign meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month (except August). They are held at the University of Gloucestershire, Francis Close Hall campus, St Paul's Road, starting promptly at 19.30Hrs. Usually in room TC 108.

Cheltenham Cycles

OPEN : TUESDAY - SATURDAY 9am-6pm
61, Winchcombe Street, Cheltenham, GL52 2NE
TEL: 01242 255414

Save Money and Improve Your Health.

Parents could save over £300 a year by walking their children to school according to figures released by the Department for Transport.

Parents drive an average of 600 miles annually to take their children to school and back but the cost of the daily wear and tear on the car and the impact of car fumes on health and on the environment is mounting. Car users also regularly suffer up to three times as much pollution as pedestrians.

A brisk one-mile walk to school and back also burns around 150 calories and helps to reduce the risk of heart disease, boost the metabolism and burn fat.

The Department for Transport, along with the Department of Health and the Department for Education and Skills, is encouraging parents and children to walk at least part of the way to school instead of taking the car. This would also allow them to teach their children road safety. Transport Minister David Jamieson said:

"We drive a significant number of miles each year to take our children to and from school, often on journeys that could be done just as easily on foot, which would benefit our health, the environment and our purse.

"Parents also have an important role to play in demonstrating road safety skills to their children. Many schools have road safety schemes in place such as 'walking buses,' where parents take turns to walk a group of children to school and back."

The average 600 miles parents in England clock up each year - in total over a billion miles a year- on the school run are enough to:

- do the London to Brighton bike ride 10 times; or
- run the London marathon 22 times; or

walk two thirds of the way from Land's End to John O'Groats.

Comfort Saddle

A company in Norfolk has just introduced a new saddle. Known as the comfort saddle. It should, according to its maker reduce saddle soreness and back pain, which many people experience with the traditional saddle.



As can be seen from the picture the normal horn is missing and the comfort saddle is also wider than a traditional saddle. The saddle also moves with the movement of the hips on a patented suspension system. More information can be obtained from:

www.comfortsaddle.com

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24th September (Just A nother Ride to the Office). Part 2.

Graham Ricketts

I regularly remind myself that British Motor Racing Grand Prix is held at Silverstone not on Cheltenham's inner ring road. Nevertheless I need to actively adopt the primary riding position when I can, especially at the approach to sharp ring road corners. The sharp left turn at the top of the Strand is a case in point. By cycling either to the left or right of the lanes as you approach this corner, any following car is almost certain to pull alongside - I don't know why but they do. Hence I don't ride at the edges. Why? Well, my bicycle happily negotiates this corner at 12-15 m.p.h. when I have the lane to myself, just as I would in a car. However, the laws of physics dictate that to turn the corner on two wheels I must lean over a little to my left. So a car alongside me on my left hand side with three feet clearance as I approach the corner suddenly becomes just a few inches as we both turn together, and that assumes the car doesn't cut across to avoid other cars on their left. Personally I find this proximity to 1000+ kg of high energy metal and glass un-nerving and do what I can to avoid the situation. The solution is clear - as a cyclist assert your position in the lane as if you were a car, as on these corners a cyclist needs as much space as a car. I keep a watchful eye on cars actually switching lanes as they go round the corners - it happens all too often. Bath Street turn from Bath Road is a gem - cars often turn sharp right here without signalling, so I always avoid being on their inside when they move off from traf-

fic lights, especially if their windows are fogged up.

Continuing my journey, I press ahead towards the



Playhouse corner, watching each and every car parked on the right for a twitch of wheels lest they start to pull out or for doors opening to alight their passengers. The fast moving traffic here makes people jostle for space, and almost predictably a rogue car forces its way into the right hand lane from the left causing the car in front to brake and shift position. Approaching the Playhouse turn, I again assert my position in the centre of the lane, looking and listening out for anyone squeezing in from behind, left or right. Not having to worry about cars alongside me as I make my approach here lets me concentrate fully on the road ahead. In the last few yards before I turn my main attention is on those drivers heading towards me from the other side of the junction. Their intention like mine is to turn into Oriel Road towards the Town Hall, but in theory I have priority over them. I eyeball the drivers - one can often anticipate quite a lot from their expression, but I'm ready to swerve or brake to avoid the driver that fails to give way or misjudges my speed. Always remember that on a bicycle priority is negotiable: that to say that you negotiate on the terms forced upon you by the motor vehicle driver - the cyclist will always come off worst in any conflict. This morning all is well and drivers in

both approaching lanes give way and allow me to coast round the corner safely into the middle lane.

A car attempts to pull across from Victoria Walk and instinctively I cover the brakes just in case. In my car I might well give way to them across if the situation was safe, but on two wheels this can easily cause anyone behind to collide with you. Many drivers don't like nor expect people to give way to others, and a bike has no stop lights and may well make any following driver simply swerve around you. The traffic lights are green and I'm aware of a following car desperate to get in front of me. It pushes past then brakes almost immediately to join the back of the traffic queue waiting for traffic lights on The Promenade. The dustbin lorry is blocking the right hand lane so the queue is longer than usual, and I edge my way carefully past the standing cars towards the advanced stop line. Before I reach it the lights turn green so I immediately seek a place in the moving traffic queue. The driver behind beckons me in and acknowledging her courtesy I re-join the moving line of cars. The chicane across the Promenade is passed without incident and I approach the red traffic lights at the start of St Georges Road. This is a frustrating junction for bikes, as nearly all the time it would be safe to proceed over the lights, as there are few pedestrians. It is sadly just one of the prices we have to pay to prevent irresponsible driving. The lights change and we move on to-

wards Bayshill Road junction. I use the LH

cycle lane to approach the advance stop line, yet as I approach the line the lights change. The car to my immediate right I assume is going straight on as there's no LH signal, but just in case I hold back momentarily only to see the car turn left in front of me. This is typical of the incident that can happen. Advance stop lines are a good thing in many ways, but are not a guarantee of safety.

St Georges Road is otherwise straightforward but I look out for cars pulling out from the left or others pulling in. Soon the road works on St George's Road bridge are approached and so await my turn to pass the road works. These will soon be gone thankfully, allowing me to reach my place of work once more.

My journey takes about ten minutes cycling in total.

Come to Leicester

Leicester Spokes is calling on other cycling bodies to get involved with their Spokefest spectacular on 27th July. Based on the successful human powered vehicle event which has taken place for some years, Spokes want to make this the UK's largest public festival of cycling. for more information contact roger@spokefest.freeserve.co.uk


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Join Cheltenham Cycle Campaign

You can make a difference by joining Cheltenham Cycle Campaign. We aim to improve conditions for cyclists, and to make the Cycle Campaign a more effective organisation. The more supporters we have the better. Individuals and families can join and local organisations are welcome to affiliate as associate members.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

email: _____

Telephone No. _____

Annual Membership £3 Individual £5 Family
£10 Associate

I enclose £ _____ for Individual/Family/Associate* membership and a donation of £ _____
Please send cheques to our Treasurer: Mr A Halls, 14 Durham Close, Warden Hill, Cheltenham, GL51 5DF

I hereby give permission to the Cheltenham Cycle Campaign to hold the above details in its records.

signed _____

Date _____

* Delete as appropriate

If Joining as a family please list other family members.

Double Yellow Lines Do they Really Work?

As an organisation we rarely have complaints about the designating of certain streets or parts of streets as "No Waiting" indicated by the usual double yellow lines and signs. But a recent Traffic Order which proposed extending the double yellow lines along one street made us wonder just how effective they are outside the centre of town. The problem lies in the fact that there are already yellow lines along part of that particular road and motorists simply ignore them knowing they are not policed. Which begs the question how effective will further restrictions be? Do you have similar experience if so please contact us so that we may pursue this with the relevant departments.

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